Your first game of American mahjong

1 What you need

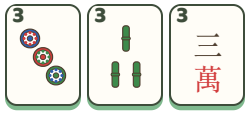
- [ ] An American mahjong set: 152 tiles
- [ ] Four racks, one for each player
- [ ] A card of winning hands for each player (every player uses the same card)
- [ ] Two dice
- [ ] Four players. Three can play too.

2 The goal

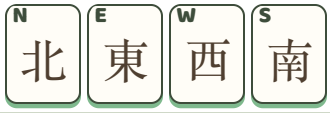
Be the first to hold 14 tiles that match one hand on the card, exactly. When you do, say "mahjong" and show your tiles.

There is no other way to win. Three of a kind and a pair mean nothing unless the card asks for them.

3 Meet the tiles



Three suits: dots, bams, craks
numbered 1 to 9, four of each tile



Winds
north, east, west, south

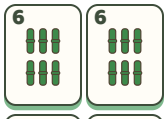


Dragons
red, green and white. White is called soap.



Flowers and jokers
any flower matches any flower; jokers are wild

4 Groups you will build



Pair: two alike



Pung: three alike



Kong: four alike



Quint: five alike, which needs a joker

5 Set up and deal

- Mix the tiles face down. Each player builds a wall 19 stacks long and 2 high in front of their rack.
- Pick a dealer, called East. East rolls two dice and opens East's wall that many stacks from the right end.
- Starting with East and moving right, everyone takes 4 tiles at a time, three times.
- East takes two more tiles, the others one. East has 14, everyone else 13.
- Stand your tiles on your rack and sort them by suit.

Standard American rules. House rules vary. Not affiliated with the National Mah Jongg League.

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6 The Charleston: trade before you play

Everyone passes 3 unwanted tiles face down, all at once.

Right → **Across** → **Left**

If all four players agree, do it again the other way: left, across, right. Then the two players across from each other may trade up to 3 more.

Never pass a joker. Keep tiles that repeat and tiles that fit one part of the card.

7 Your turn

Draw one → **Discard one**

- East goes first and only discards, because East already has 14.
- Say the tile's name as you put it down, face up.
- Play moves to the right.

8 Taking someone's discard

You may call the tile just discarded if it finishes a group of three or more that your hand needs, or if it gives you mahjong.



Say "call", lay the group face up on your rack, then discard. **Never** call for a pair unless it wins the hand.

9 Jokers



A joker fills in for any tile in a group of three or more.

- **Never** in a pair or as a single tile.
- If someone's face-up group holds a joker and you have the real tile, you may swap them on your turn.

10 Winning and paying

- Each hand on the card has a value.
- Win on someone's discard: that player pays double, the others pay the value.
- Draw your own winning tile: everyone pays double.
- If the tiles run out, nobody wins and nobody pays.

11 Words you will hear

Rack: the stand that holds your tiles

Wall: the rows of face-down tiles you draw from

Discard: a tile thrown face up to end a turn

Call: to claim the newest discard

Exposure: a called group, laid face up

Concealed: a hand that allows no calls

Self-pick: drawing your own winning tile

Soap: the white dragon; also zero

Wall game: a hand nobody wins

East: the dealer for this hand

12 Three tips for your first game

- Pick one part of the card and collect toward it. Change your mind only once.
- Do not call the first tile you can. A call shows the table what you are doing.
- Ask. Every table expects a new player to ask.

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